

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Florida Freight Stakeholders Task Force was formed as a result of the Governor's Intermodal Transportation Summit held on June 18, 1998 in Jacksonville. The Task Force was to be a private/public partnership that would address the needs of Florida's intermodal freight transportation. The Task Force was organized into five subcommittees on August 6, 1998, at a meeting in Tallahassee sponsored by the Florida DOT. The subcommittee chairs formed an Executive Committee to manage the work of the Task Force. In addition, the Task Force agreed to limit the scope of its work to freight intermodal transportation issues and not passenger transportation issues. The following Task Force objectives were defined:

- Identify, prioritize and recommend freight transportation projects for fast-track funding.
- Develop recommendations for the 2020 Florida Statewide Intermodal Systems Plan that will address Florida's freight transportation interests.

### **OBJECTIVE 1– PROJECT SELECTION**

To identify and prioritize freight projects, it was necessary to first establish geographical boundaries and criteria for project definition. This led to development of the Florida Strategic Freight Network. Priority freight projects had to be on the defined freight network. This network includes the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS); primary freight facilities including ports, air freight terminals, rail intermodal terminals and highway freight terminals; and road connections between the FIHS and the freight facilities. The Task Force, working with the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR), defined the freight network, and CUTR developed the freight network map.

The second step in the process began with development of a prioritization methodology to evaluate freight projects for selection. This methodology, which was developed by CUTR, began with the eligibility criteria. To be eligible for consideration, projects had to:

- be located on the Strategic Freight Network,
- facilitate freight movement, and
- have a public benefit to cost ratio greater than one.

Once a project was deemed to be an eligible freight project, it was then prioritized with other projects using a scoring system that took into account the following criteria:

- benefit to cost ratio
- stage of development /environmental compliance
- time to complete project
- current level of service (LOS)
- actual/critical safety rating
- neighborhood impacts of the project
- current freight volume

The third step in the process was the identification, prioritization, and selection of projects for fast-track funding. In support of this effort, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$10 million to fund freight projects recommended by the Freight Task Force. This appropriation enabled the Task Force to establish a pilot fast-track program, with the \$10 million funding capability as an integral part of this objective.

To identify projects for this fast-track program, the Florida DOT first identified “freight” projects currently existing in public sector work programs. In addition, the Task Force solicited applications for fast-track funding from Task Force members, MPOs, ports, and airports. The response included applications for 17 projects totaling \$101.3 million.

Each application was reviewed and then prioritized by CUTR using the methodology outlined above. The Task Force Executive Committee then reviewed the projects and made its recommendations. With resources limited to \$10 million, the overall goal was to maximize the value of the projects funded. Table 1 is a summary of projects that were recommended for funding by the Freight Task Force utilizing the \$10 million allocation.

**Table 1. Projects Recommended for Funding**

PROJECT	FACILITY	LOCATION	FUNDING RECOMMENDED
Improvements to NW 36th Street and 67th Avenue (Ludlum Road)	NW 67th Avenue at 36th Street	Miami	\$1,500,000
Rehabilitation of rail tracks leading to Tampa Port Authority's Hookers Point Terminal	Hookers Point Lead Track	Tampa	\$2,760,000
Air Cargo Frontage Road intersection improvements	Air Cargo Frontage Road intersection improvements	Tampa	\$1,000,000
Design and construction of Cargo Area Access Road at Jacksonville International Airport (JIA)	Alternate Access Road	Jacksonville	\$2,500,000
Eller hive FEC/Overpass Bridge	Eller Drive	Ft. Lauderdale	\$2,000,000
Additional research studies related to freight and goods movement in Florida			\$240,000
TOTAL			\$10,000,000

Five additional projects were considered highly worthy but could not be funded within the \$10 million appropriation. These projects were recommended for acceleration of funding within the normal work program process. In addition, these project applications were submitted for consideration in the recently established FDOT “Fast-Track” funding program. Table 2 is a summary of these projects.

**Table 2. Projects Recommended for Accelerated Funding**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Facility</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Funding Recommended</b>
Improvements to NW 25th Street Viaduct	NW 25th Street Viaduct	Miami	<b>\$48,500,000</b>
Rebuilding SW 4th Avenue in Fort Lauderdale	SW 4th Avenue	Fort Lauderdale	<b>\$2,500,000</b>
Widening of SR-436 from 4 to 6 lanes	SR 436	Orlando	<b>\$10,000,000</b>
Phase I of access improvements at NE 5th and 6th Streets I 1st and 2nd Avenues	<b>NE</b> 1st and 2nd Avenue	Miami	<b>\$7,000,000</b>
8th Street Access Ramp to Haines Street Expressway	Haines Street Expressway	Jacksonville	<b>\$4,100,000</b>

## **OBJECTIVE 2 — RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a result of the work of the Task Force, the following recommendations were made. The first four recommendations derive from the work done to identify and select projects for fast-track funding. The last three recommendations support continuation of the work of the Task Force.

- **Establish the Florida Strategic Freight Network as a part of the Intermodal Systems Plan.** The network definition and the network map should be maintained on an ongoing basis and improved by the addition of data elements such as freight density and LOS for key highway segments. In addition, the concept of the freight network should be expanded to include freight service level standards and highway design standards for freight movement.
- **Adopt the Florida Freight Stakeholders Task Force process for prioritization and selection of future freight projects.** The prioritization criteria represent a good “first cut” at project evaluation and provide a combination of financial and non-financial selection criteria. They also provide for inclusion in MPO long-range transportation plans where applicable. It is recognized that the prioritization methodology cannot be used by itself to evaluate and select projects. Professional judgment, strategic direction, and geographical equity become a part of the human judgment that is also needed for the proper selection of projects for funding.
- **Fund future research and planning studies.** CUTR has been instrumental in supporting the Freight Task Force’s request to develop project selection methodology. However, additional work needs to be done related to freight and goods movement, especially in the area of project benefit definition and quantification. CUTR is well qualified to continue this research, and it is

recommended that \$240,000 of the \$10 million fast-track appropriation be allocated to CUTR for this research work.

- **Conduct a Florida International Trade and Port Strategy Study to define specific trade corridor strategies and the supporting port investment priorities.** Ten projects totaling \$34.9 million were submitted by seven of Florida's fourteen ports. Florida ports compete directly with major ports in neighboring states where funding can be focused on a few key ports. A comprehensive, professionally prepared strategy study will provide needed guidelines for port infrastructure investment. This will assist in prioritizing port investment to optimize use of available funds.
- **Establish a Florida Freight Advisory Council within FDOT.** The blending of private sector and public sector professionals within the Task Force created an effective team for dealing with freight transportation issues. This structure serves as a model for the Freight Council of the future in dealing with fast-track project selection and development of the freight transportation strategy needed to support future economic development and international trade.
- **Establish Freight Mobility Committees in the largest MPOs.** One of the concerns of the private sector members of the Task Force was the difficulty in understanding and participating in the MPO process. A freight mobility committee with members from the freight industry could provide access to the MPO process and act as a sponsor for the projects of the MPO's freight constituents.
- **Create a Florida Freight Project Investment Bank to fund freight projects.** The Bank would be the mechanism for identifying funding sources and securing funds for well-justified projects. It could utilize federal, state, local and private funds. FDOT would develop appropriate expertise to consolidate a variety of funding sources to facilitate funding of projects through the Bank.